

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE MODERNIST'S REPLY TO HIS CRITICS.

To the Editor of The Open Court:

As the author of the *Letters to His Holiness, Pius X*, I may interest a certain number of the readers of *The Open Court* if I briefly state the impression made on me by the more severe criticisms cited in the November number of this magazine from devoted members and leaders of the Roman Catholic church. If those criticisms fail to take account of the crisis produced by modernism, or to give any consideration to the good faith or even to the sufferings of modernists, I make no complaint. If some of them are ignorant I will not call them so. If others are even vulgar I prefer not to score them as such. It will be more becoming and more just to pass over in silence the unamiable and more personal aspects of these comments, and to regard them as expressing a state of mind and as indicating a process of education which in substance we may treat with tolerance, however little we can admire them.

It must be remembered that to the men who have thus written of the book, their theology and the Truth-Ideal are coterminous and identical. They look upon that theology both in its principles and in its history as the very thought and mind of Deity revealed to man for man's salvation. They have inherited the idea, and have never broken loose from it, that whosoever points out the historical blemishes and the intellectual and spiritual deficiencies of this theology is a falsifier doomed to perdition. For when Deity speaks who can gainsay Him but the black Adversary of double tongue and cloven foot himself? Primitive as this conception appears, destructive of intellectual liberty, and fatal to every form of progress, it is yet conatural to all theologies, and is as prompt among Mohammedans to visit condemnation on the higher critic of the Koran as among Catholics on the critical student of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures or the history of dogma. It requires a high degree of independence in one addicted or vowed to a particular theology to put to himself such fundamental questions as these: Are my theology and eternal Truth absolutely one after all? Ought I to examine the basis of my theory of the Ultimate with open mind and fearless scrutiny? What am I submitting to, the voice of God or the venerable conjectures of men who like myself groped through darkness for the Inscrutable? Have I any right to call a faith my own when I have never yet gone beyond taking it on bended knees and with closed mind from the teachers who transmitted it to me?

As long as such self-respecting questions as these either never drift into the mind of a man, or if they do, are flouted and buffeted away as sins, sins which lead the soul within hearing distance of the roaring furnaces of hell,

we need not be astonished that the innovator is anathematized and his sincere convictions set down as the raving of a deluded mind and the clamor of a corrupted heart. "He blasphemeth!" is an old cry, and we shall cease to hear it only when men keep sequestered in their hearts a clean altar to the most austere of divinities which is Truth, and understand that though tongues cease and prophecies are made void, this God remains as authoritative as immortal. When that day comes we shall see too that of all the handmaidens of Truth the chief is Charity. Until then it behooves us to have much patience and make few remonstrances; to work steadfastly and endure nobly; to hasten as we can the coming day, and if our eyes shall not see it, to die content. It will come in its season despite our weakness and our adversaries' strength.

MY RELIGIOUS CONFESSION.

BY DR. NATHANIEL I. RUBINKAM.

[On returning the proofs of his article "The Bible and the Future Pulpit," together with the editorial reply entitled "The Loyalty of Clergymen" published in the November number of *The Open Court*, Dr. Rubinkam sends the following communication which we publish in justice to him.—ED.]

To the Editor of The Open Court:

Many thanks for your courtesy in sending me your reply to my article on "The Bible and the Future Pulpit." You are at full liberty to publish it in case you, at the same time, print this rejoinder which amounts to a religious confession.

When you assert that the churches are now willing to hear the truth, I would ask, what truth? Would they listen to what I regard the truth, that a "revealed" religion is a thing simply of the imagination; the truth that the Bible has no authority above other books; the truth that the church has no calling superior to any other human institution?

As to my "prejudice" it was originally, and is still, apart from dogma, in favor of the institution in which both myself and my ancestors were deeply imbedded. I was born in the lap of the old orthodoxy. I was educated at the University of Princeton under President James McCosh. After a year in the household of the great German pietist, Dr. August Tholuck, I came back to America and graduated at the Princeton Theological Seminary under Dr. Charles Hodge.

During twenty years of service in the orthodox pulpit, I made one long persistent study of the evidences of what I was preaching. I left no stone unturned. I went to the Orient, studied "holy" places, and the "sacred" persons who were the alleged vehicles of revelation.

Still dissatisfied I returned to Germany and gave long years to research, and took my doctor's degree in Oriental philology and the historical criticism of the Old Testament. My conviction became well grounded, absolute and incontrovertible, that the Bible is a book for the study and dispute of scholars, but in no sense a revelation to the modern man. As to the dogmas founded upon it, I became thoroughly convinced that the idea of the "second person of the Trinity," a child of the "third person," dying to appease a "first person" angered at the human race, was the merest theological drivél.

In spite of all my ancestral and personal prejudices *for* the church, in spite of all family and social influences, I was deeply imbued with the conclusion that the Christian's devil in hell and Father in heaven were pure theological fictions.